

Elements of Theatre/Drama

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Oklahoma A+ Fellows – August 2005

Theatre has visual, aural, oral, and kinetic elements. It is a collaborative art form and often uses the elements of all other art forms.

“Drama is action, movement, a form of physical, including vocal, expression...Drama shares with other subjects on the school timetable opportunities for physical, emotional, mental, individual and social activities of a creative nature.”

—Creative Drama and Improvised Movement for Children by Janet Goodridge

Drama Integration Basics:

Three things necessary to have a theatre experience:

- Actor
- Audience
- Story (Message)

Actor's three tools:

- Voice
- Body
- Imagination

Three components needed to make a play interesting to watch:

- Action- Blocking
- Dialogue- Script
- Conflict- Obstacle to the Objective/problem

Character development:

- Objective: Why
- Obstacle to the Objective: Conflict

Other aspects of theatre/drama:

- Plot- What
- Spectacle- Where and How

Elements of dramatic structure:

- Theme
- Major Dramatic Question
- Exposition
- Inciting Moment
- Rising Action
- Crisis
- Climax
- Falling Action

Theatre/Drama Integration Terms:

Creative Dramatics: Informal activities in which children are guided by a leader to express themselves through the medium of drama. Many elements of theatre can be used in creative dramatics activities. To quote Winifred Ward, a pioneer in creative dramatics from her book *Playmaking with Children*, she states that the basic premises for creative dramatics are: “1. To provide a controlled emotional outlet, 2. To provide each child with an avenue of expression in one of the arts, 3. To encourage and guide the child’s creative imagination, 4. To give young people opportunities to grow in social understanding and cooperation, and 5. To give children experience in thinking on their feet and in expressing ideas fearlessly.” The primary difference to formal theatre is that creative dramatics focuses on the process and formal theatre on the product. When working with elementary aged children the process is what should be the focus of student’s dramatic work and is what can make integration with core curriculum successful.

Improvisation: Creating on-the-spot a play, scene, or character based on a theme, goal or given situation without rehearsal. High School and Middle School Students love to play improvisation games (like those seen on the TV show “Who’s Line Is It Anyway?”)

Pantomime, Mime: Acting without sound; expressions of thoughts, feelings and emotion through body actions; also, not using real objects, pretending the objects are there.

Play Production: The deliberate, thoughtful process of staging a scripted piece that ends in a performance before an audience.

Process Drama: A joint effort of teacher and student to create together an imaginary event using improvisation and historical themes. Teacher plays a role within the drama (usually a leader of some kind) as the students create the rest of the community. The objective of this type of lesson is to use drama to help children understand human experience from the inside out and to demonstrate through role playing what they already know, but perhaps do not know they know.

Reader’s Theatre: A dramatic approach to literature or the written word. The focus is on the written word dramatized by the actor’s oral interpretation. The actor, to bring focus to the written word carries the script.

Role Playing/Characterization: Trying on a character. The student portrays the personality of a person through thought, action, dialogue and perhaps costume and make-up.

Tableau: A grouping of silent, motionless (freeze) students representing an incident. This could be a painting, photograph or an historical moment.

Theatre Games: Organized games that use elements of drama. Build collaboration, creative thinking and problem solving with students and teacher.

National Standards for Theatre Education:

www.educationworld.com

Grades K-4

- Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations
- Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations
- Directing by planning classroom dramatizations
- Researching by finding information to support classroom dramatizations
- Comparing and connecting art forms by describing theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms
- Analyzing and explaining personal preferences and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
- Understanding context by recognizing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in daily life

Grades 5-8

- Script writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes
- Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes
- Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
- Researching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes
- Comparing and incorporating art forms by analyzing methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms
- Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
- Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the community and in other cultures

Grade 9-12

- Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations
- Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations
- Directing by planning classroom dramatizations
- Researching by finding information to support classroom dramatizations
- Comparing and connecting art forms by describing theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms
- Analyzing and explaining personal preferences and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
- Understanding context by recognizing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in daily life

Resources:

Lola Davis-Jones, North Carolina A+ Fellow

Coger, L.I. & White, M.R. *Reader's Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature*. Scott Foresman & Co., 1973. ISBN: 0673078590

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Spolin, V. *Theatre Game File*. Northwestern University Press; Book & Cards edition, 1989. ISBN: 0810140071

Wagner, B.J. *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium*. Heinemann Drama, 1999. ISBN: 1893056007

Ward, W. *Playmaking with Children*. Prentice Hall, 1957. ISBN: 013683888X